

The GAO is instructed to report on implementation of program changes 1 year after the first 5-year contract period following enactment of this legislation. The adequacy of funding allocated to the QIOs for local initiatives has been in dispute among the QIOs. Congress is to receive an independent report about the adequacy of QIO financing before the initiation of each contract period.

The contracting process is strengthened by mandating timely contracting with the QIOs by CMS and by lengthening the contract period from 3 to 5 years. All QIOs must bid competitively every 5 years.

Fifth, local boards have been physician-dominated with little consumer representation. Our bill eliminates the requirement that QIOs must be physician sponsored organizations. Our bill improves local QIO accountability by strengthening the authority of the Secretary over board structure and function. It authorizes the Secretary to ensure that non-physician quality experts and qualified consumers are given appropriate representation on state QIO boards. It authorizes the Secretary to ensure that the board structure is appropriate, that the compensation of board members and executives is market-based and that conflict of interest among board members is mitigated.

Sixth, as the QIOs focus more of their energies on working with providers to improve quality the demand for their services in this endeavor exceed their resources. For example, the number of doctors requesting help from the Utah QIO in selecting information technology for their offices far exceeds the resources available to it from its CMS contract.

Our bill allows a QIO to contract with a provider or organization if it meets one of several requirements. Among them are that the QIO must receive no more than 5 percent of its revenue from a single provider or organization, or if the contracting organization is subject to review by the QIO, conflict of interest must be mitigated by using an out-of-state QIO to perform the reviews that the local QIO would otherwise perform.

The QIO program differs from other Federal health care quality programs in that it does not just measure quality; it works with providers to attain it. The Medicare Quality Improvement Organization Act of 2007 strengthens the rights of beneficiaries, strengthens the administration of the program and the contracting process, provides for more accountability of contractors, and focuses the program on creating quality systems.

I urge my colleagues to join with me in strengthening the QIO program. It is one of the cornerstones of the quality initiative not just for Medicare but for all Americans.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mr. DODD):

S.J. Res. 25. A joint resolution providing for the appointment of John W.

McCarter as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the joint resolution be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the joint resolution was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S.J. RES. 25

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, in accordance with section 5581 of the Revised Statutes (20 U.S.C. 43), the vacancy on the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, in the class other than Members of Congress, occurring because of the expiration of the term of Walter E. Massey of Georgia, is filled by the appointment of John W. McCarter of Illinois, for a term of 6 years, effective on the date of the enactment of this resolution.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 385—HONORING THOSE WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO ASSIST IN THE CLEANUP OF THE NOVEMBER 7, 2007, OIL SPILL IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY

Mrs. BOXER (for herself and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 385

Whereas the oil spill that occurred on November 7, 2007, in the San Francisco Bay resulted in the discharge of between 53,570 and 58,000 gallons of toxic bunker fuel, causing one of the Bay Area's worse environmental disasters;

Whereas 28 beaches were closed and over 1,300 birds so far have been severely impacted by the spill;

Whereas thousands of individuals throughout the San Francisco Bay Area immediately volunteered to assist with the cleanup;

Whereas Bay Area community non-profit organizations, such as San Francisco Connect, have also rallied to support the response and recovery work by supporting these volunteer efforts;

Whereas Bay Area environmental organizations, such as Baykeeper, Save the Bay, and Bay Institute, have provided invaluable leadership in reporting, assessing, and helping to remediate the damage to the Bay's ecosystem;

Whereas the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, members of the San Francisco Crab Boat Owners Association, commercial crabbers, and other Bay Area fishermen have all joined the cleanup efforts as well; and

Whereas the city of San Francisco, particularly through its Department of Emergency Management, has significantly contributed to the overall response, bringing considerable resources to bear: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate honors those individuals and organizations who have volunteered to assist in the cleanup of the November 7, 2007, oil spill in one of our Nation's most beloved national treasures, the San Francisco Bay.

SENATE RESOLUTION 386—TO AUTHORIZE TESTIMONY AND LEGAL REPRESENTATION IN STATE OF NEBRASKA V. PAMIR J. SAFI

Mr. REID (for himself and Mr. MCCONNELL) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 386

Whereas, in the case of State of Nebraska v. Pamir J. Safi, No. CR05-87, pending in Nebraska District Court for Lancaster County in Lincoln, Nebraska, testimony has been requested from Dorothy Anderson and Blayne Garth Glissman, Jr., former employees in the office of Senator Chuck Hagel;

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(a) and 704(a)(2) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 2 U.S.C. §§288b(a) and 288c(a)(2), the Senate may direct its counsel to represent employees of the Senate with respect to any subpoena, order, or request for testimony relating to their official responsibilities;

Whereas, by the privileges of the Senate of the United States and Rule XI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, no evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may, by the judicial or administrative process, be taken from such control or possession but by permission of the Senate;

Whereas, when it appears that evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may promote the administration of justice, the Senate will take such action as will promote the ends of justice consistent with the privileges of the Senate: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved That Dorothy Anderson and Blayne Garth Glissman, Jr. are authorized to testify in the case of State of Nebraska v. Pamir J. Safi, except concerning matters for which a privilege should be asserted.

Sec. 2. The Senate Legal Counsel is authorized to represent Dorothy Anderson and Blayne Garth Glissman, Jr. in connection with the testimony authorized in section one of this resolution.

SENATE RESOLUTION 387—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE DEGRADATION OF THE JORDAN RIVER AND THE DEAD SEA AND WELCOMING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF ISRAEL, JORDAN, AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Mr. LUGAR (for himself and Mr. DURBIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 387

Whereas the Dead Sea and the Jordan River are bodies of water of exceptional historic, religious, cultural, economic, and environmental importance for the Middle East and the world;

Whereas the world's 3 great monotheistic faiths—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—consider the Jordan River a holy place;

Whereas local governments have diverted more than 90 percent of the Jordan's traditional 1,300,000,000 cubic meters of annual water flow in order to satisfy a growing demand for water in the arid region;

Whereas the Jordan River is the primary tributary of the Dead Sea and the dramatically reduced flow of the Jordan River has been the primary cause of a 20 meter fall in the Dead Sea's water level and a ½ decline in the Dead Sea's surface area in less than 50 years;